

Chiral Amine Synthesis

Since amines are ubiquitous in natural products (e.g., alkaloids) as well as in synthetic compounds, and because asymmetric synthetic procedures are now used routinely in organic chemistry laboratories (thanks to the impressive progress made in the last few years), the recent book *Chiral Amine Synthesis* edited by Thomas C. Nugent will undoubtedly be of interest to a very broad community of organic chemists. The major importance of this wide-ranging topic would at first glance make it seem an overwhelming task to review every aspect of this area in a single book. Upon embarking on such an ambitious project, the main difficulty probably lies in choosing which of the many available methods should be included. Why should one particular method be emphasized and not another? Indeed, one might expect some readers to be highly critical of a book that fails to cover their favorite methods. Although the editor remains rather vague about the reasons for choosing the topics of the different chapters, the intention of reporting only recent results (less than ten years old) is clearly stated, and that could explain some apparent omissions. Thus, it should be noted that most of the references cited by the authors of the chapters are for the period 2000–2009.

Having made these choices, Thomas Nugent finally presents a very pleasant book, which can be useful for chemists from the academic world and from industry, for university teachers who wish to set up a new course, and for researchers and students who simply want an overview of the subject or some particular details of the methods employed.

The book is organized in 14 chapters written by scientists from Asia, Europe, and North America, all of whom are specialists in the topics covered. Many chapters deal with asymmetric addition to imines. The asymmetric addition of nucleophiles to imines is, of course, a very widely used method, which is nicely reviewed in the first chapter of this book. It is one of the largest chapters with numerous references. In contrast, Chapter 2 is much more modest and describes a comparatively unusual but interesting reaction, asymmetric radical addition to imines. Reactions for asymmetric addition to imines by hydrogenation (Chapter 6) and by hydrosilylation (Chapter 4), vinylogous Mannich reactions (Chapter 5), reductive amination reactions (Chapter 7), and the aza-Morita-Baylis-Hillman reaction (Chapter 13) are all described at considerable length. The other methods covered include the enantioselective hydrogenation of enamines (Chapter 8), of enamides (Chapter 9), and of nitrogen-based heteroaromatics

(Chapter 10), as well as asymmetric hydroamination (Chapter 11) and C–H activation (Chapter 12). Two chapters describe the use of chiral Brønsted acid catalysts (Chapter 3) and of biocatalysts (Chapter 14) for the asymmetric synthesis of amines.

It is evident that asymmetry aspects govern the methodology chosen for the preparation of a chiral amine. Thus, the book particularly emphasizes methods based on asymmetric catalysis, as they appear to be quite efficient, atom-economical, and elegant.

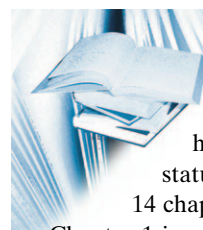
The chapters contain a great wealth of information, and this book will certainly provide useful guidelines for synthetic chemists. The presentation is excellent, and each chapter ends with a series of short exercise questions for students. A few chapters also include some representative experimental procedures.

In conclusion, this is a very clearly presented and well-organized book, which goes to considerable effort to simplify the reader's comprehension of a complex area of research. It will probably be a reference book for years to come, and can be recommended to teachers, research scientists, and students.

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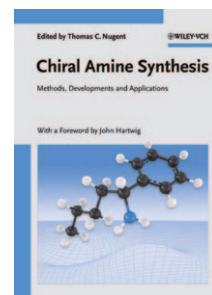


Industrial Biotechnology

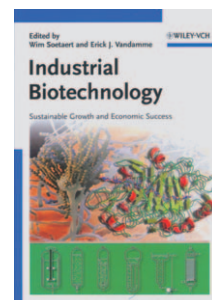
Is it possible to give a comprehensive survey of the current status of industrial biotechnology in 14 chapters? We shall see.

Chapter 1 is a historical review, describing the journey from the first antibiotics to monoclonal antibodies and modern biopharmaceuticals. Then a long second chapter gives a clear and informative description of metabolic engineering, taking bioethanol production—a well-established process—as an example. The chapter also describes how the situation for a product undergoing development of an already established process (example: propanediol) differs from that for a relatively new product (succinic acid).

Chapter 3 provides a rather brief discussion of fermentation technology. Here it would have been helpful to include a short comparison of the many different fermentation options, in the form of a chart showing advantages and disadvantages with regard to process convenience and economy.



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